

No, a Chief Happiness Officer won't make up for your poor management

The recurring themes of happiness and wellbeing in the workplace seem to be compulsory in today's world. We are expected to be happy at work, just like at home. These concerns are embodied by the emergence of a new job to monitor this, whose title "Chief Happiness Officer" has already proven controversial. However, does this new role really contribute to an increase in productivity or is it rather a way to pick up the slack of poor managers? Sylvain Tillon, co-founder of Tilkee, discusses the question.

Happiness in the workplace is a manager's core responsibility. It goes without saying that employees are much more productive in an enriching and encouraging workplace. However, the demand for employing someone dedicated specifically to this task is at an all-time high. The financial and mental health of a company should be the responsibility of the company director, thus employing a Chief Happiness Officer is simply a way to cover up for the lack of managerial insight and strength.

If a company director does not know how to be the leading Chief Happiness Officer of their own company, how can they create this role and delegate this task without admitting to their own failure? How, in this climate of social upheaval, can a CHO be justified by the management and be justifiable for their employees?

A CHO cannot make up for a lack of managerial strategy

Within the hierarchy of a traditional business model, the need for a CHO is unclear. It is neither an unnecessary extravagance or a gimmick to attract future employees, but equally the CHO cannot pretend to contribute innovative managerial knowledge. Today, in a society where technology and innovation are key, the wellbeing of employees should be core to a company's DNA. Wellbeing cannot be downloaded. It is almost like starting a website and then later announcing that a digital strategy has been put in place...

A CHO shouldn't be a clown

If a CHO's role is not to decorate the office or organise events, what is their actual job description? Offering massages to tired colleagues? Bringing in the croissants in the morning and the beer at 6 pm? The CHO is neither a minion nor a clown, and it seems strange that this role has been left to one person to deal with. In order to foster diversity and cohesion, the relational aspect of this role should be spread throughout the company.

Everyone should have a positive attitude and propose internal initiatives, such as the creation of teams for wellbeing projects in the workplace (organising annual seminars, sports tournaments, regional breakfasts...) which should be efficient and productive in themselves.

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A CHO does not create cohesion in a team

In a healthy company, where there is not too much competition and employees feel valued, there is no need for a Chief Happiness Officer to create an enjoyable working environment. When employees collaborate, whether it be for work or on a more human level, the results are compelling.

Two major features can be put in place: firstly, offices which are suited to professional life and personal convenience; and secondly a recruitment policy which includes employees in the decision making process regarding new recruitments (even their veto).

The role of a CHO is necessary, however it is essential for directors currently considering recruiting for the position to question themselves on their merit as this new recruit's main concern will be to instill a culture of happiness amongst employees, assets and the work environment, and is not in any way concerned with helping cover for bad management.

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